

*The*

ULTIMATE

# MIDDLE SCHOOL SURVIVAL GUIDE



**“Do This, Not That”**  
LIFE SKILLS FOR SUCCESS

BESTSELLING AUTHORS

**JONATHAN AND ERICA  
CATHERMAN**

**Books by Erica and Jonathan Catherman**

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*The Girls' Guide to Conquering Middle School*

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*Guiding the Next Great Generation*

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*a division of Baker Publishing Group*  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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Published by Revell  
a division of Baker Publishing Group  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
RevellBooks.com

Printed in the United States of America

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Catherman, Jonathan, author. | Catherman, Erica, 1975– author.  
Title: The ultimate middle school survival guide: “Do this, not that” life skills for success / Jonathan and Erica Catherman.  
Description: Grand Rapids, Michigan : Revell, a division of Baker Publishing Group, [2024] | Includes bibliographical references.  
Identifiers: LCCN 2023031288 | ISBN 9780800745752 (paperback : alk. paper) | ISBN 9780800745769 (casebound) | ISBN 9781493445370 (ebook)  
Subjects: LCSH: Middle school students—Life skills guides—Juvenile literature.  
Classification: LCC LB1135 .C38 2024 | DDC 373.18—dc23/eng/20230818  
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023031288>

The authors are represented by the literary agency of Books & Such.

Baker Publishing Group publications use paper produced from sustainable forestry practices and postconsumer waste whenever possible.

24 25 26 27 28 29 30      7 6 5 4 3 2 1

# WELCOME TO MIDDLE SCHOOL

**YOU MATTER  
YOU BELONG HERE  
YOU CAN DO THIS**

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# INTRODUCTION

**C**ongratulations, you've made it to middle school! Gone are the elementary days of line leaders, bathroom buddies, and classroom pets. Instead, you have graduated from avoiding playground cooties to riding the roller coaster of emotions, friendships, and physical changes we call middle school. The ups, downs, twists, and turns during these few years of life can, at times, feel overwhelming to the senses. Kind of like the weird feeling you get at an amusement park when a ride barrels down the track at Mach speeds into a massive blind drop, followed by two loops, and then a stomach-churning corkscrew. Sometimes you feel like you're about to lose your stomach and find yourself screaming uncontrollably. One turn later and your hands are raised high and you're cheering out loud. Guess what? Those are often totally normal feelings in middle school too. Whether you enjoy the thrill of the ride or absolutely hate the suspense, it's best to embrace the changes and learn some new levels of self-control in order to make the most of the next few years. Who knows? You may actually have a pretty good time in middle school.

Jump from the craziness of the amusement park ride known as middle school to the drama of the teenage theater. A poorly performed "drama" can ruin some potential good times in middle school. The truth is, you may not be able to control all the events that happen around you in middle school, but you *can* decide not to get all caught up in them. Getting involved in middle school drama can be like tossing fuel onto a fire . . . things get hot! Making much to-do about nothing is the fuel



that feeds the fire between people and can melt friendships down. Try to extinguish any drama before it starts by thinking carefully about your actions and the words you choose to use in middle school. Here's a good filter: Before you speak, text, or post, pause and *THINK* about what you are about to do or say.

Is it *TRUE*?

Is it *HELPFUL*?

Is it *INSPIRING*?

Is it *NECESSARY*?

Is it *KIND*?

This is the best pro-you and anti-drama hack ever. It's been around for years and works pretty well for anyone mature enough to *THINK* about discovering and developing the best version of themselves in middle school.

We're just getting started. This book is all about giving you lots of helpful hints and the kind of "Do this, not that" advice every kid needs as they grow older. Basically, you want to succeed. And we want you to succeed in not just surviving but better yet—*thriving*—in middle school. For now, please accept this book as our gift to you because we believe in you. We hope what you read next will help you be and do your very best at this age and beyond. Good luck and enjoy your adventures in middle school!

# 1<sup>ST</sup> DAY

**B**efore you arrive for the first day of middle school, it's best to know a little about what you're stepping into. Here's what you need to know about the first day. Just like you, a lot of the students are new to the building. They are also feeling a little nervous, just like you. The older kids are excited to see their friends, so they won't pay much attention to the new kids walking around. The building is bigger, halls are louder, and passing between classes can be like moving through a crazed herd of cats. The truth is, you might get lost once or twice on the first day of school. But don't worry about it because you won't be the only one. A right turn down the wrong hall can send anybody into the land of the lost. If you do find yourself wandering around, don't freak out. Your best plan for getting back on track and heading in the right direction is only three steps away.

**STEP 1**—Ask for directions. The worst thing you can do is keep standing there looking lost.

**STEP 2**—Get moving. The classroom isn't coming to you, so don't just stand there.

**STEP 3**—Don't make excuses. When you do finally make it to class, just tell the teacher that you got lost. They'll totally understand when you're honest about a mistake.

## POP QUIZ

**Q:** Where is the school gym?

**A:** You have no idea, so tape a school map on the inside cover of a master folder. When you get lost, just open the folder, read the map, and find your way to gym class.



# ABSENCES

**A**ccording to experts in middle school attendance offices everywhere, there are three legit reasons to be absent from school:

**Reason #1, Sick**—An infection, affliction, or disorder that can be diagnosed. Symptoms include a high temperature, chunks hurling out of either end of your digestive system, broken bones, or another verifiable illness. NOT sick is when you are faking it.

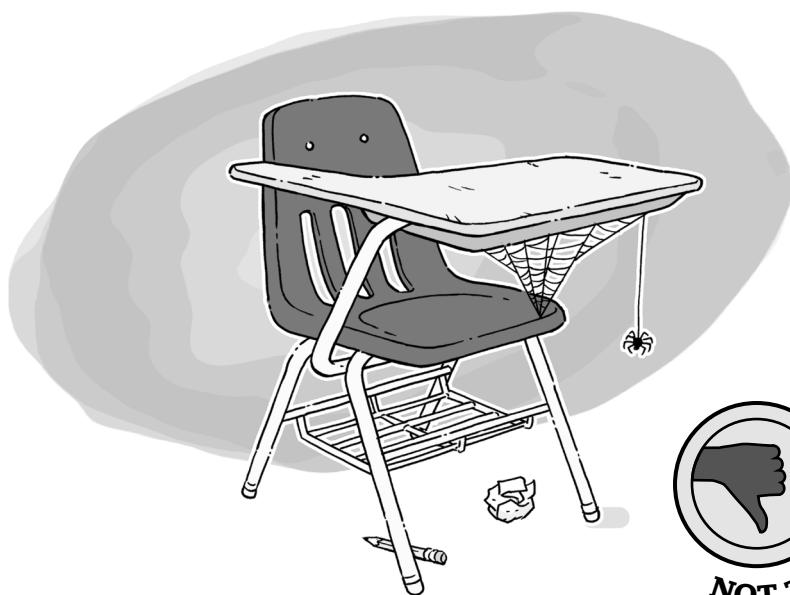
**Reason #2, Emergency**—Situations requiring immediate action, like the passing of a family member, your home being damaged in a freak weather storm, or an actual zombie apocalypse. NOT an emergency is the death of your goldfish, “dating” breakups, or your favorite jeans didn’t get washed due to a false call on that zombie apocalypse thing.

**Reason #3, Professional intervention**—When serious life or legal needs require outside professional or legal help. These may include, but are not limited to, counseling, court, or a doctor appointment. NOT an intervention includes “doing time” on the beach or a 10-hour therapy session with “Dr. Pillow.”

When you are absent for a day or two, complete the school’s online absence form or return to class with a parent’s or doctor’s note with a legitimate explanation of your absence.

“Don’t pretend to be sick and stay home to get out of a test or project. Fake absences still mean making up class and homework when you come back. There goes all your free time for a couple of days.”

—COLE C.



# ANNOUNCEMENTS

**E**ach morning a mystical voice from the great beyond will guide you into the school day. Actually, the voice will come from a squawking overhead speaker or live-screen broadcast from a “studio” somewhere in the media center or main office. Either way, the info shared over the school announcements is worth paying attention to if knowing today’s lunch menu, the bell schedule, the next awards assembly, or the grade level winning the school-wide fundraiser is important to you. Such information is power, so sit down, listen up, and collect all the news you need to rule the day.

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## TRUE STORY

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A true pioneer in media broadcasting is the late, great Barbara Walters. The first female co-anchor of a US network evening news program in 1976, Barbara Walters was featured nightly on the *ABC Evening News*. She earned \$1 million a year, which was a first for a female journalist. As one of the most respected journalists in television history, she was celebrated for her interview style and quality, which granted her access to some of the world’s most famous and influential people. Listed as one of *TV Guide*’s “50 Greatest TV Stars of All Time,” she interviewed movie stars, athletes, heroes, and every US president and first lady from Richard and Pat Nixon through Barack and Michelle Obama. Barbara Walters retired in 2014 after 65 years working as a journalist.

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# ASSEMBLIES

**T**he freedom of assembly is an important part of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. When the Founding Fathers penned the rights of our nation, they stated that the people are allowed peaceful assembly. Never did they imagine packs of wild students swarming in crazed assembly. Pep rallies, awards presentations, talent shows, and guest speakers are all perfect times for the entire school to get together and have some fun. The freedoms students get to experience in assemblies include laughing, learning, clapping, cheering, and being part of stuff like class competitions and fun games. Sleeping, messaging, pushing, pranking, and disrupting an assembly are not freedoms, are not protected, and will not be tolerated. So enjoy the break in the school day, keep the gathering peaceful, and the school will grant you the freedom to assemble in another assembly soon.

## TO DO IN MIDDLE SCHOOL:

- ☒ Volunteer to represent your grade in a school assembly class competition.



DO THIS



NOT THAT

# BACKPACKS

**M**ost schools allow students to carry some of their books and class supplies in a midsize backpack. This reduces your need to stop by your locker between every class and makes it easier to carry stuff between home and school. Some students get the wrong idea about how to use their pack and overstuff it like they are on a yearlong wilderness expedition. Other kids rarely clean out their packs. Old food and sweaty gym clothes quickly go rotten, turning your tote into a putrid canvas petri dish. Your best bet is to pack light and keep it clean. Your back muscles—and the nose of the kid walking behind you—will appreciate it.

## STRANGE but True

Experts recommend a student's backpack weigh no more than 10–20% of their body weight.<sup>1</sup> Yet on average, 6th graders carry backpacks weighing 18.4 pounds. Incredibly, some student packs weighed in as heavy as 30 pounds! What are they stuffing in there? Is math class meeting on the summit of Mount Everest?



# BATHROOM

## *Keep It Clean*

**T**here are only a few good reasons to visit the room of thrones, and none of them include trashing the place on purpose! Seriously, do what you have to do, if you need “two,” but keep it clean. Flush from your mind any urge to mark a stall door, clog a sink, or scratch the mirrors before returning to class.

### **STRANGE** but True

Most people “visit” the toilet 6 to 8 times a day. That adds up to an average of 2,555 times a year. At about 2 minutes per stop, the total is just over 85 hours a year of bathroom usage. Divide those 85 hours of toilet time by 24 hours in a day and wow! You spend almost 4 full days per year using the toilet.



# BATHROOM

## *No Loitering*

**W**hen you tinkle, you sprinkle, and while in the stall, don't touch the wall. The truth is, there's no escaping germ exposure in the bathroom, public or private. This is bad news for germaphobes and grungies alike. With every "use," particles of fecal bacteria go airborne and land on the floor, walls, and your hands. It doesn't even matter if you're a "foot flusher," nobody gets away germ-free. To make it simple for all to understand, every time you "go," particles of pee and poo stick to you.

The solution is simple. NO LOITERING! Limit your exposure to toxic toilets by not staying and talking in the bathroom. That, and always, always, always wash your hands before leaving.

And PLEASE use soap!

## *Just Joking*



**You never really appreciate what  
you've got until it's gone.**

Toilet paper is a good example.

**What did one toilet say to the other?**

You look flushed.

